

The Choices We Make
by The Great Weiss Shark

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><p>Chapter One: Promises_

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><p>Graduation day was a bittersweet affair in Ruby's honest opinion. She had always felt out of place during heavy emotional events like these, her default reaction being a childish laugh and impatience. Ruby understood the sentimentality behind it, but it was still nothing more than just an overhyped occasion, sort of like birthday parties or family reunions—especially like family reunions.<p>

Curious, she dared a glance over to her left and saw her teammates Blake and Yang looking equally ambivalent. It was comforting to know she wasn't the only one feeling this way. Saying goodbye was difficult; there was no doubt in her mind about that, but it was even harder to hold onto the past. They had to keep moving forward. They had to stay vigilant.

"And now a few words from this year's valedictorian," Professor Ozpin calmly said, leaning into the microphone ever so slightly. "Ladies

and gentlemen, Ms. Weiss Schnee."

The auditorium exploded in a cacophony of applause and adulation as a beautiful young woman, dressed in a sharp snow-white tuxedo over a crimson dress shirt, walked proudly onto the stage. She strode towards Ozpin elegantly with her head held high and shook his hand firmly when offered.

Ruby couldn't contain her joy when she saw her breathtakingly handsome partner take the stand. "That's my girlfriend!" she shouted gleefully at the top of her lungs, hooting and hollering. "Go Weiss! Represent Team RWBY!"

"Be quiet, you dolt!" a visibly flustered Weiss snapped, her irritated voice amplified by the microphone. The auditorium went deathly silent and all eyes were suddenly on Ruby who fell back into her seat dying of embarrassment. "Ahem, now that everyone has settled downâ€œ I would like to begin by saying how much of an honour it is to be standing here in front of you all. Though, to be perfectly honest, I'm actually just happy to be standing at all; that final exam was incredibly difficult."

A wave of weak chuckles washed over the graduates like a lazy tide on the shore. It lacked any real mirth since Weiss' words were painfully true. Ruby still couldn't move without having her muscles scream in absolute agony, and she was sure the rest of her team weren't faring any better.

"But I digress," Weiss continued with a thoughtful sigh. "The trial we overcame was but a mere taste of the hardships we will face in the years to come. We are huntsmen and huntresses from here on out, guardians sworn to uphold the pride and integrity set forth by those who came before us.

"First, I would like to thank our professors for teaching us to the best of their abilities. The wisdom you have bestowed unto us will never be forgottenâ€œ Yang Xiao Long may be the one exception though. That woman is one serious concussion away from either amnesia or permanent brain damage. Maybe both."

"I don't know who that is, but she sounds awesome!" Yang shouted in response, earning her a hearty laugh.

"My point exactly," Weiss chuckled dryly. "I would like to especially thank Professor Goodwitch for always cleaning up our messes; you have the patience of a saint. I know we've caused you a lot of trouble over the years, what with the constant influx of criminal activity directed at me and my family, the random citywide invasions that tend follow my team wherever we go, and let's not forget the disastrous food fights we've found ourselves deeply embroiled in from time to time. So on behalf of team RWBYâ€œ yes, Ruby, I am indeed 'representing'." Ruby sat back down, arms crossed with a small pout on her face. "Ahem, thank you for always being there. How you manage to do all that you do without raising your voice is a feat I will never be able to comprehend, because if it were meâ€œ well, we've all heard about what happened to my dormitory last year. I regret nothing."

"Now, Professor Ozpin, I also have a few choice words reserved especially for you. I have been dying to say this for years and I

believe now is the most opportune time to lay it all out." Weiss looked over her shoulder to the grey-haired man in green who kindly smiled back at her, but instead of returning it she merely frowned at him. "I blame you for my early descent into insanity. Because without you and your crazy machinations, I would not have had to spend these fourâ€|" Weiss paused and continued in a much lighter tone, "amazing years with the infuriating Ruby Rose, impetuous Yang Xiao Long, and angst Blake Belladonna constantly at my side disrupting my studies. I wouldn't be here smiling my brightest if it weren't for you, so thank you from the bottom of my cold, icy heart.

"Next I would like to thank my teammates Yang and Blake for everything they have done for me and for helping write this speech. We may not have always agreed or saw eye-to-eye, but you two are my dearest of friends and I wish you both the best of luck and success wherever the winds may take you. Even if our paths were to diverge here, I'm sure we'll meet somewhere else down the line. But hopefully not too far down, I would miss you both terribly. So how about brunch next Tuesday? My treat.

"And now, last but not least, to the person who has made the biggest impact in my life, my best friend and leader, Ruby Rose. You dunce, you better know how much I love you. The time I have spent with you have literally been the best years of my life, though you probably shaved off just as much with that death trap you made me sleep under for the first year and a half. I never thought we'd get this close. When you were picked to be leader over me, I resented you. I legitimately hated you, in fact. What did you have that I didn't? What made you so special that Professor Ozpin chose to personally invite you into Beacon while I had to claw my way up? The jealousy I felt made me scrutinize every little thing you didâ€| but before I knew it, I wasn't watching you to find a fault. I was watching you because you shined so brightly, like a gem held up to the sun. You sparked a fire in me that continues to burn to this day. You made me strive for a life that went beyond my family name, rankings, and academicsâ€| you are what Beacon Academy stands for. You embody it, and like a torch you pass it along to every soul you encounterâ€"mine included. The bravery you display in the face of adversity and the uncanny charm you have that can make even the most cynical of people want to believe in hope again, those are the qualities of a great leader... I am so proud of you."

Putting both hands over her mouth, Ruby did her best to hold back her choked sobs. The tears ran freely down Ruby's cheeks; she didn't care if the whole school saw her break down. She had built a reputation amongst her peers as the girl who always smiled and never cried. They were usually right in that assumption, but to hell with it now. She was so incredibly happy. The fears spawned from four years of constantly worrying if she deserved to have someone as brilliant as Weiss as both her partner and lover were gone in an instant. She had made Weiss proud. She was worthy.

The rest of Weiss' speech went by in a blur, Ruby too dazed by Weiss' beauty and confidence to pay any real attention. But she could tell from the crowd's excited reaction that it was well receivedâ€"yes, even the puns were well "reschneeeved". Ruby wanted groan out loud when she caught on to those, but the audience seemed to like them. Either way, the light hearted jokes Yang threw in between Blake's passionate statements melded in seamlessly with Weiss' highly articulated manner of speech. Ruby was a little sad she didn't pay

closer attention, but knowing Weiss and the press, she would be able to find it online or see it in the news eventually.

Everything revolving around her team was a simple search away; however, the validity of some of the sources was up for question. It was rather difficult for them to adjust to Weiss' celebrity status, especially for Blake, but they eventually did to some degree. For example, their first date and kiss had become a public affair mere hours after, much to Ruby's chagrin. Even Blake and Yang were subjected to the press' unforgiving prying eyes. Ruby was just relieved to know her other first time with Weiss didn't make headlines—well, at least, she hoped so. On second thought, the part of the speech where Weiss profusely thanked her public relations representative was starting to make a little more sense; she'd have to ask Weiss about it later tonight, when they were alone.

A couple hours had passed since then, the time whizzing by in a euphoric blur as the graduates mingled happily in the fully catered reception hall. Yang and Blake had excused themselves earlier that evening, leaving Weiss, Ruby, and their other friends behind. It was a little sad to see her team split up on their final night as students, but just like she and Weiss, they too had their own lives to discuss.

While an onslaught of eager party goers lined up to talk to her girlfriend, Ruby shied away to a two-seated table next to a window in a forgotten corner. The limelight still made Ruby feel uncomfortable; that was Weiss' world, not hers, and she was more than happy to stay back in the shadows while her lover basked in the attention. Weiss Schnee deserved the people's respect; she was on the path to greatness with the future of Faunus equality rights resting on her wings. But where did that leave Ruby?

The four years she'd spent in Beacon flew past her in the blink of an eye. There was never a moment where she could stop and think about what she would do once this magical time was over. Other than being a huntress, Ruby couldn't see anything else.

A lot was clearly on her mind, most of it pertaining to her journey with the future CEO. A quick peek in her girlfriend's general direction told Ruby that Weiss would be busy for quite awhile more, and she went back to her thoughts with a lonely sigh.

Things with Weiss were great. She loved Ruby immensely; it was evident in the fondness reflected in Weiss' pale blue eyes. The icy heiress also had a habit of listlessly losing herself in Ruby's eyes when the redhead rambled on about something she deemed unimportant. She'd just casually tune Ruby out and continue watching her with a lopsided smile, feigning interest just so Ruby would keep talking. The way Weiss looked at her like she was the only other person in the world always managed to make Ruby blush when she finally noticed. And whenever Weiss made love to her, Ruby could tangibly feel her lover's unwavering devotion through her gentle and masterful ministrations; the passionate kisses that always managed to take Ruby's breath away and make her weak in the knees were her favourite, and the warm, comforting embrace they shared after their mutual desires were successfully sated was often enough to make Ruby forget about the dangers they faced as huntresses. It was a fairytale romance by all definition, but Ruby felt it was too perfect, and that unsettled her greatly.

Their relationship started off like one of Blake's romantic novels. The two protagonists meet in a less than desirable way, and thanks to an uncanny coincidence, they're left in a situation where they're irrevocably forced together. Then through difficult hardship and strife, the two realize that the other is more than meets the eye, and the mutual attraction begins. It's here that the story's main conflict arises. Normally, it's a misunderstanding where one is caught with another person in a precarious situation, this person usually having history with the protagonist, and the two would-be lovers go their separate ways. Insert a sappy montage with equally sappy music of them pining helplessly for one another but being too stubborn to apologize and get on with things. The story ends with one of the protagonists hitting their limit and proclaiming their love, apologizing over and over for their stupidity, and etcetera. Then they kiss and make up. End of story. Touching. Really.

Ruby rubbed her cold hands together to warm them up, wishing Weiss was with her; nothing felt quite as comforting as having Weiss' hands in hers. She looked at her open palms and pictured Weiss casually slipping hers on top, completing the puzzle. They fit together so perfectly that they were practically made for each other, like puzzle pieces that just fell into place or a key to a lock. Everything was so damn perfect it wasn't fun anymore.

Ruby furrowed her brows at the pervading thought and banished it to the void. Weiss meant everything to her. She brought a cool, comforting stability to the chaos in Ruby's life, acting as the bright light at the end of a long tunnel. She had a home with Weiss, the only place where she could rest her weary wings without worry.

So lost in her musings, Ruby failed to notice Weiss approach her until the white haired woman spoke, shattering the dome of dissonance encasing her.

"Sorry for leaving you alone like that. It was one thing after another," Weiss apologized, offering her girlfriend her hand. Dumbfounded, Ruby blinked twice before taking it and standing up. "Anyway, I need you to follow me; there's something I have to show you."

"Alright, Ms. Valedictorian, lead the way." Ruby gave Weiss' hand a squeeze and said, "So, where to?"

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><p>Weiss kept Ruby close as she led her to the courtyard where they first met. She had talked animatedly on their way there about their colourful past, the friends they'd made, and all of the unforgettable adventures they had during their four crazy years together at Beacon Academy. Ruby was entranced by Weiss' sultry voice, pulled in by the velvety smooth tone overflowing with her typical brand of Schnee confidence; Weiss was in peak form tonight. Yet despite the duelist's valiant efforts, Ruby saw through the façade. She could easily tell from the way Weiss' hand trembled in hers that the older woman was nervous. About what, exactly, she wasn't sure. But the strong, determined look burning fiercely in Weiss' beautiful blue eyes told her that this whole evening, and its peculiarities, were something her meticulous partner had planned.</p>

Weiss' words were soon few and far between, and often tapered off into quiet grunts of acknowledgement or amused hums. Ruby theorized that the closer they got to their destination, the more nervous Weiss would get—“at least that's what the heiress' intimidating expression told her. She had deciphered the socially obtuse woman's actions years ago. Not even Weiss' nastiest glare could make Ruby flinch. In fact, she thought Weiss looked rather cute with the tight-lipped snarl. Others begged to differ, but Ruby didn't care about them. They didn't know Weiss they way she knew her.

Ruby's eyes had been so focused on her lover's commanding form and grace that the red petals littering the ground went unnoticed until their subtle scent tickled her senses. Weiss grinned down victoriously at her when she saw the sparkle of discovery twinkle in Ruby's eyes. Before them were two neat rows of dimly lit tea candles. They illuminated the smooth concrete pathway with their gentle light, pushing back a small piece of the starry veil of darkness that lulled the city of Vale to sleep. Ruby could see that all of their friends were there waiting for them, their faces giddy with anticipation. Even a few unfamiliar faces stood out in the small crowd gathering around the candles and rose petals, drawn in by the curious sight.

Ruby looked back and forth between the simple yet elegant sight before her and Weiss Schnee's trademarked “I've impressed you, haven't I?” look. It infuriated her to no end that the sometimes painfully predictable heiress was able to surprise her, Ruby Rose, Huntress Extraordinaire. But, as always, she was too excited to find out what Weiss had up her sleeve to voice any real annoyance. All Weiss' gifts and surprises had come from the heart and were never garish or extravagant like people often imagined. They were sweet and well-thought out and so typically Weiss.

“Weiss, what's this all about?” Ruby asked, tightening her grip on Weiss' hand in case the heiress tried to escape. “C'mon, tell me already!”

Despite the pleading questions, Weiss remained silent. She stood stock still with her eyes trained at the center of her little display, a small opening with a wide berth filled with rose petals. The first step she took was hesitant and heavy, weighted down by an unclear reason. And every step she took thereafter continued the trend, growing more mechanical and rigid as they neared their final destination. Ruby stuck to her heiress like a sloth on a tree branch, refusing to let go.

“Ruby,” Weiss said curtly, startling the younger woman.

“Yeah?” Ruby reluctantly let go of Weiss to properly face her. When Weiss used that specific tone of voice with her it usually meant she was in for a scolding or a lecture of some sort, but her instincts were telling her that it was neither this nor that. “What's up, princess?”

“Dolt,” Weiss chuckled.

The hardened expression on Weiss' face melted away when light blue met molten silver. A small smile graced her pale pink lips, the one reserved only for Ruby's eyes when they were in public. It let the

self-conscious girl know she wasn't in any trouble, and usually, that alone was enough to assuage her doubts, but not this time. In fact, all it managed to do was drain what little patience she had left.

Weiss lifted her left hand up to Ruby's cheek and caressed it lovingly, her thumb ghosting over the redhead's rosy lips. The look of utter devotion on Weiss' face coupled with her regal countenance made Ruby think of a fairy tale prince who had just saved his princess.

"We've been stuck together for four years," Weiss said for the umpteenth time this day; it made Ruby want to roll her eyes—she didn't, of course, because that would be rude. And Weiss hated rudeness, despite being rather brusque herself. "I can tell by the look on your face that you're annoyed with how much I've brought that up."

"Really?" Ruby held both her cheeks, looking down in embarrassment. "I didn't mean to—well, you have been saying it a lot! ugh, I'm sorry."

"No, I'm the one who should be sorry." Weiss smiled warmly at Ruby. She reached out and brushed the hair out of her lover's eyes to get a clearer look at face. "I'm being a sentimental fool today, thinking back on everything we've gone through. I can't seem to stop..."

"You already know this, but before coming to Beacon, I was nothing more than a caged bird forced to sing. They called me the nightingale of Atlas—a song bird trapped in a gilded cage, a spectacle for the eyes, my wings clipped before I even learned to fly. Then, to stave off the boredom and crushing loneliness, I made use of my personal library, which was filled to the brim with tomes from every corner of the world. I looked for all the answers in what I've read, secretly waiting for my life to change. But books can't replace real life knowledge—I never thought I would make it, to be honest."

"I was overconfident in my abilities and failed to see my shortcomings. The freedom that was thrust upon me was too much, too soon. So I retreated back into my cage—my safe haven—and locked myself behind those familiar bars. But then you came along and freed me. You broke my cage, set it on fire, and forced me to come face to face with the world I had turned my back on. You made me open my eyes."

"I saw the world for what it was—the dissonance that plagued it; yet with you, nestled in your warm embrace, I found harmony. I found peace."

"When we leave Beacon, my life as a student ends. I'll be spearheaded towards the top; my father's war will become mine. And soon I'll have no choice but to live my life in the moral grey area—straddling the thin line between good and evil. I'll be forced to do unspeakable things to good, innocent people and all in the name of the SDC and posterity!"

Weiss took a deep breath in and exhaled, her eyes closed in a moment of deep thought. Ruby watched her wearily, feeling both glee and apprehension. She was parched, her mouth drier than a Vacuo desert during the summer, but Weiss was her oasis. All she needed to do was

reach out and take a sip to make everything better again.

"But with you, I might be able to hold onto my beliefs and keep a shred of hope and honour tucked away in my heart. As long as I you're beside me, keeping me warm at night, I may yet keep my soul. You are the light of my life, Ruby, my single greatest treasure." Weiss got down on one knee, reaching into her back pocket as she descended. In the palm of her right hand was a small velvet box with the Schnee family emblem on the lid. She flicked it open with her thumb, revealing a surprisingly simple silver band with a modest diamond. "Like this ring, so simple and pure, I offer you my heart and my sword. Whatever may come, I will stay with you at the ready, poised to strike at any who wish you harm. I will forevermore be stalwart and loyal, even if only to you, this I promise."

Ruby clamped both hands over her mouth, tears freely falling as the weight of Weiss' proposal hung on her shoulders.

"Ruby Rose, will you marry me?"

"â€¦ no."

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><p>I have something special in the works for this piece and I'm so excited to finally be able to share it with you all. I'd also like to point out something fun while I have the chance to. Look at the final two lines of this chapter. Does it remind you of anything? No? Well, go check out my profile and read "Where You Rightfully Belong". I'm serious. Go. Review that. Tell me I'm pretty or something.

Please remember to drop a review if you enjoyed it!

End
file.